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ACTION WHA-00

RELEASED IN PART

B1, 1.4(D)

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00
	EUR-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00
	AC-00	NSAE-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00
	USIE-00	PMB-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/000W

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O 191804Z MAY 04
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6362
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY
 NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY
 USINT HAVANA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001730

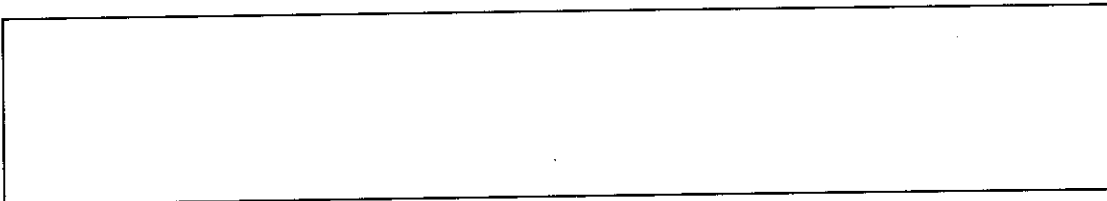
NSC FOR CBARTON
 USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD
 STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2014
 TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, KDEM, OAS, VE
 SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: SIGNATURE APPEALS UPDATE

REF: A. CARACAS 1656
 B. CARACAS 1542
 C. CARACAS 1692

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor,
 for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

 Summary



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Deputies Reparos May 20-24

2. (SBU) The National Electoral Council (CNE) has been preparing for the signature appeals process ("reparos") against opposition and pro-GOV deputies May 20-24 (the actual collection days are May 21-23). During the signature drives in November 2003, Chavez supporters collected signatures against 32 opposition deputies; the opposition collected against 32 pro-GOV deputies. The CNE determined that sufficient signatures were collected against 15 of the opposition deputies and two of the pro-GOV deputies for the deputies' signature appeals. The CNE will appeals centers in 12 states, corresponding to the deputies' electoral districts. The OAS plans to have 13 observers and The Carter Center (TCC) 20 in-country for the event. (Note: One press analysis concluded that the National Assembly's balance of power would only be affected by the deputies' referendum process if two opposition deputies who currently have no alternates were to be recalled.)

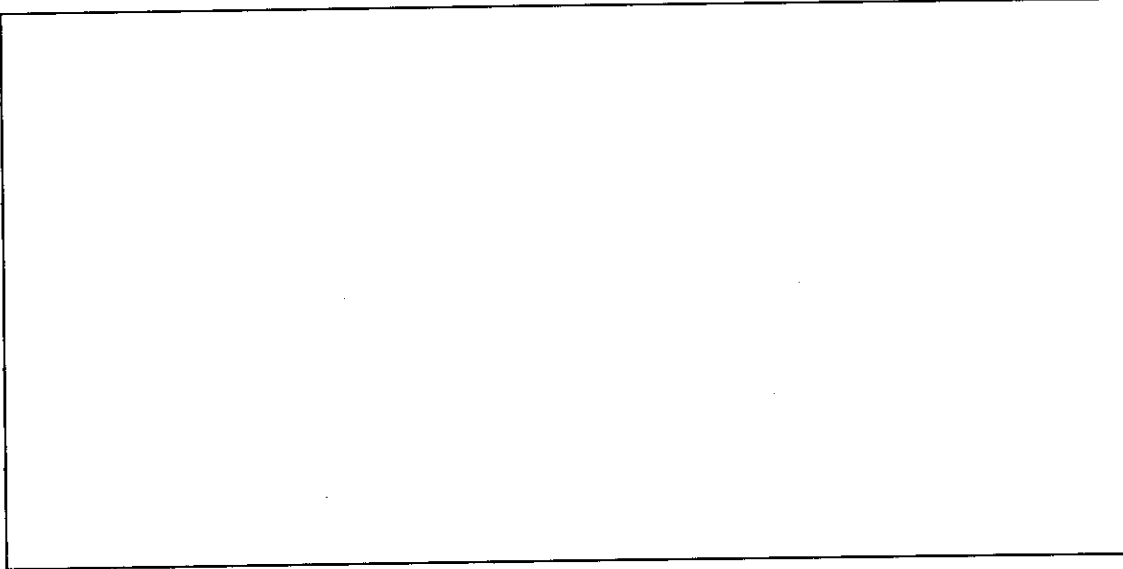
New Rules For Adding Up Signatures

3. (U) The CNE approved the rules for totalling the appeals on May 18, though has yet to publish the text. The CNE board debated the rules for two weeks. Among the points of contention, Coordinadora Democratica (CD) negotiator Alberto Quiroz said, was the CD desire to ensure the principle of "sudden death," or that appeals will be totalled up at the

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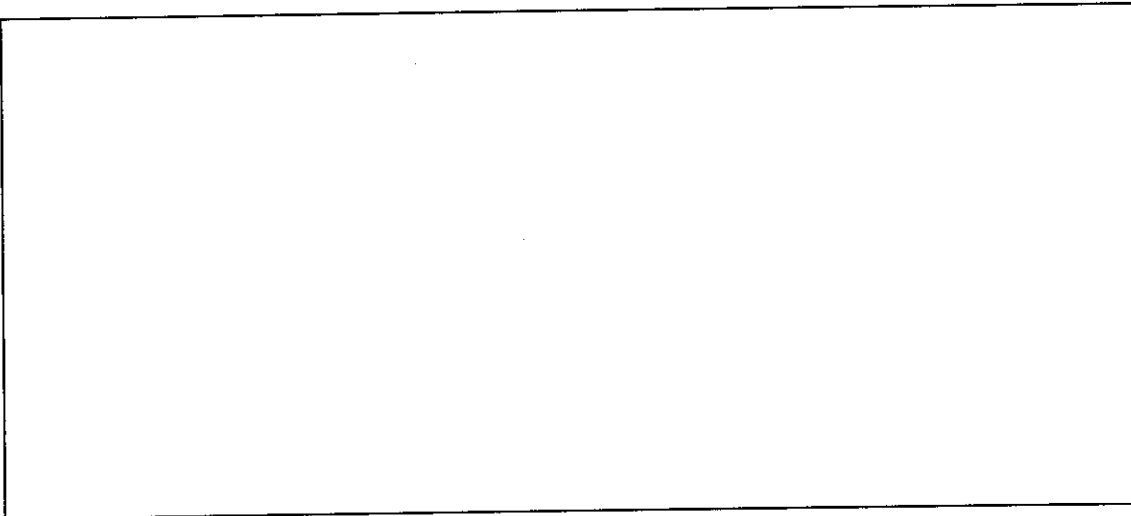
end of each day and not be subject to further verification procedures. He added that the CD also wanted the rules to avoid the possibility that the CNE could nullify appeals that are not properly tracked on daily tally sheets ("actas") as happened with the November signature drive. Finally, Quiroz said the CD wanted to be sure the totalization rules track with the appeals regulations that give the CNE just four days to announce the results.

DIEX To Police Identity Cards



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Registers Look Good



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Repentance: Don't Ask, Don't Tell

B1

Mujica: People Power Is Key

B1

Chavez Sees Referendum "Poco Probable"

8. (U) Chavez said in an interview published by Reuters May 18 he believed the opposition would not get enough signatures in the appeals process to activate the referendum against him. He added that if the opposition does win, it will be more difficult for them because he will win the referendum. Chavez supporters are largely repeating this line in the press and in contacts with the Embassy.

Sumate Directors Ordered To Court

9. (U) With one week remaining before the appeals process, Sumate directors Alejandro Plas and Maria Corina Machado have

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been summoned by a public prosecutor under suspicion of "treason and conspiracy" in relation to the NGO's receipt of grants from the National Endowment for Democracy. Chavez leveled the charges of treason in February, after which prosecutors opened a case against the NGO that provides electoral technical support for the opposition. Plas and Machado announced in a press conference on May 18 that despite already giving statements, they had been recalled -- Plas for May 21 and Machado for May 26 -- as suspects. The summons could result in their detention. Plas and Machado denounced the summons as an attempt to dissuade Sumate volunteers from supporting the appeals process.

OAS/TCC and CNE Make Up, Until the Next Fight

10. (U) After days of private discussion, the OAS/TCC and the CNE issued on May 17 a joint statement declaring they had "smoothed things over" and that the observers would stay on. CNE Director Rodriguez warned on May 18, however, that the observers are invited because of their impartiality; the moment they lose it, Rodriguez said, the CNE will reissue its ultimatum. The dispute arose when the OAS/TCC issued a joint statement May 12 disputing the legality of the CNE decision to permit people to withdraw their names from the signature petitions to revoke President Chavez because they changed their minds. Objecting to the statement, CNE President Francisco Carrasquero issued an ultimatum that the observers retract their statement or the CNE would "reconsider" the missions' participation (ref a).

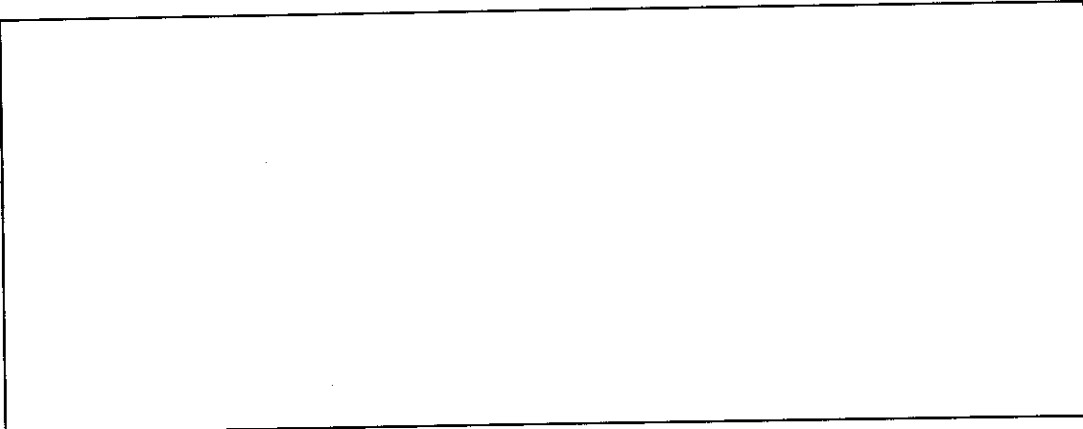
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Comment

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